

# **CHOOSING FORGIVENESS AFTER GENOCIDE**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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# **ABSTRACT**

## Choosing Forgiveness after Genocide

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Thomas Aquinas has written on the topic of mercy and justice as virtues. I use his theories to outline an idea of how forgiveness is an act of mercy. I build off Glen Pettigrove's *Forgiveness and Love* to define forgiveness. Though the nature of forgiveness is often uncertain, it is possible to forgive, even after having been the victim of genocide. Using the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide as test cases, a theory of forgiveness will be tested to see if it can hold, even in an example as extreme as genocide. Forgiveness is a twofold act of mercy. It is emotional, but it is not entirely emotionally dependent. Emotions influence forgiveness, but people choose to forgive by an act of the will, which can be ordered by the intellect. I intend to analyze common conceptions of forgiveness, an essential component of societal healing, and how those common conceptions have affected survivors' will to forgive their former persecutors. The Holocaust and the Rwandan genocides are representative cases where victims and criminals continue to seek healing. For an appropriate understanding of these atrocities, I will research the different historical contexts of these genocides, what happened during the genocides, and what has happened since, including individual accounts. Because 'forgiveness' is often used without a clear definition, I will research philosophical works on forgiveness to create a working definition. This definition should serve to identify what forgiveness is for victims of genocide.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to the one whom I consider the true author, my mother. Thank you, my August Queen, my Star in this stormy sea of life. You are always there for me, and I could never have written this thesis without your constant love and affection. You have always been there to guide me, when I could not find the answer. This thesis and all that I do is for you.

Thank you to my brothers and sisters who love me and put up with their annoyingly philosophical older brother. I would like to thank all of my friends, especially my roommates who have endured the mess I have created in the house while in my writing or reading stupors. Thank you, officemates at the Glasscock foundation for your constant love and support. I could never have written this without knowing there was someone else going through everything with me. Thank you to all of my friends who have been willing to listen to me ramble about whatever new concept I had recently discovered throughout my research.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I will develop a theory of forgiveness that can apply to cases of genocide. Although I will test my definition of forgiveness against cases of genocide, no part of my definition should differ from a general definition of forgiveness. This should be true because, aside from the intense physical, emotional, and spiritual losses that genocide victims endure, the actual act of forgiving should uphold a general structure in all situations. (1) A person offends another. (2) The offended person makes the decision to forgive, rather than either seek retribution or hold a grudge. (3) The offended forgives the offender. No matter how small or large a crime may be, this structure should remain, when a victim chooses to forgive. I will explain the difference between a victim forgiving by not seeking for retribution and a victim letting go of a grudge when I explain the different types of forgiveness at the end of chapter 1. An astute reader might notice that I did not mention an apology in my structure. As I will explain in chapter 1, forgiveness does not always require an apology. A victim may demand an apology before forgiving, but offended parties have the ability to forgive without an apology. The purpose of using genocides as test cases allows my definition to face extreme scenarios that a definition must satisfy. If the definition fails in the context of genocides, it is a failed definition of forgiveness.

Historically, forgiveness has been a topic solely discussed within the realm of religion. Within the past century, it has expanded its influence, entering boldly into the realms of psychology and philosophy. This thesis will mainly focus on the philosophical nature of forgiveness, but I will also introduce religious themes insofar as they affect the philosophical nature of forgiveness. This is especially relevant for Jewish victims of the Holocaust, considering

Judaism has a vast amount of contribution to forgiveness from both philosophical and religious works. Similarly, in Rwanda, the majority of the population is either Roman Catholic or Protestant Christian, so Christian conceptions of forgiveness will also be relevant.

When discussing various themes related to religion, I will draw upon Roman Catholic Thomism for a representative view of the Christian concept of God, since this seems to be the most developed and most accessible elaboration of Christian theology. This area of my research has consisted in a study of Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* as it pertains to the ethics of justice and mercy. I also bring in other resources such as *The Bible*. Jewish philosophers such as Jankelevitch and Levinas are relevant views of Jewish thought on the issue. I will refer to these two Jewish philosophers, rather than religious authorities.

I will not focus on the necessity of forgiveness for genocide victims. Forgiveness has a plethora of moral and psychological benefits, but the aim of this thesis is to analyze forgiveness, rather than to promote it. This topic is a necessary contribution for other discussions, but it would distract from the purpose of this thesis. The questions I will ask throughout this thesis are: (1) What is forgiveness; (2) How does one forgive; (3) How does a forgiver treat the forgiven after the fact? Naturally, these three questions overlap significantly, but a thorough discussion of all three of these questions will provide a complete understanding of forgiveness.

This work will also acknowledge the concept of justice because it is a necessary aspect of forgiveness. Justice and forgiveness are inherently connected. Without justice, forgiveness could not exist because it would have nothing to overcome. Justice is the virtue of repaying what is due. In the case of a murder, the just victim punishes the criminal because the criminal has earned punishment. This serves either to educate the criminal or to set the community at ease. If the offender apologizes, the victim can choose to release the murderer from his due punishment.

Yet, the forgiver can be both just and merciful. He may still demand recompense for the crime done to him, but the penitent criminal freely gives atonement. Through this seemingly paradoxical operation, justice and mercy may coexist. In this way, just as obtaining what is due is the action of the virtue justice, forgiveness is the action of the virtue of mercy.

With this definition as a guide, this thesis will analyze several other philosophers' arguments for what forgiveness is, asking the three questions mentioned above of each philosopher: (1) What is forgiveness; (2) How does one Forgive; (3) How does a forgiver treat the forgiven after the fact? For this effort, I will employ Glen Pettigrove's *Forgiveness and Love*, Linda Radzik's *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics*, Espen Galmund's *Supererogatory Forgiveness*, Tvetan Todorov's *Vengeance and Forgiveness*, Emmanuel Levinas' *Toward the Other*, John Wilson's *Why Forgiveness Requires Repentance*. They will help to introduce the contemporary arguments surrounding forgiveness.

Having thoroughly developed a theory of forgiveness, I will compare each aspect of forgiveness to the real experiences encountered in genocide. Thus, these genocides will function as test cases for my theory. If the theory fails in the case of genocide, it is a failed theory. Forgiveness should apply to all situations in the same manner. If it does not, then people are simply talking about two different things when they individually mention forgiveness or suggest that someone forgive. Aside from being the truth, a theory of forgiveness that cannot apply to victims of genocide is useless for genocide victims. Suffering from as horrible losses as victims of genocide do, they are in need of the benefits of forgiveness, and a theory of forgiveness should aspire to provide that possibility for them. Otherwise, a theory must admit that forgiveness is impossible.



# **CHAPTER I**

## **ON WHAT FORGIVENESS IS**

Forgiveness is an act of mercy that a victim can choose. Specifically, the victim chooses to give back more to the person than is due. A victim chooses to do this of his own free will. Otherwise, giving back more than is due is another crime because the victim is again forced to lose something without choosing it, namely justice. If a person is intimidated into not pressing charges, he has not forgiven. He has been coerced. Definitions of forgiveness that oppose this usually argue that forgiveness is some form of healing between the parties involved. Forgiveness does not necessarily require a change in mindset. Forgiveness solely considers whether or not the victim chose to punish the criminal. If a victim begins to consider the offender as a friend again or consider him worthy of trust, they reconcile, rather than forgive. Words do change, and this definition has a narrow scope of forgiveness. However, the concept of forgiveness has existed as long as history, and the current way people use the word forgiveness does not accurately represent the concept of forgiveness traditionally used. For this reason, I will argue that a definition of forgiveness as a sort of pardoning for a debt, may not be the only definition commonly employed, but it is always a relevant way to understand what people mean, when they use the word. Forgiveness is not an emotion, but it is an emotional act. Victims and offenders do not necessarily have to act according to their emotions. If an offender punched a man in the face, the offender may not have acted because he is angry. He could also make the decision to punch solely based off of an intellectual choice of the will. Many offenses are stimulated by emotional impulses, but decision made out of apathy show that both offenses and forgiveness are dependent upon an intellectual decision or acquiescence of the will to the emotions.

## What Forgiveness is Not

By forgiving, a victim does not commit to forgetting that the wrong ever happened. A victim may always remember. In many circumstances, a victim may need to remember for his own safety. Vladimir Jankelevitch goes so far as to consider them mutually exclusive concepts.<sup>1</sup> As soon as a wound is forgotten, it cannot be forgiven. A victim can only forgive as long as he remembers. Therefore, a victim cannot forgive by acting as if nothing ever happened. That would constitute forgetting. In the act of forgiving, a victim must bring himself to remember what happened and still forgive the person(s) responsible. After forgiving, a victim may need to stop alluding to his old wound, but I will refer to that in Chapter 3.

Excusing an action and forgiving an action are two different things. To excuse an action, someone injured must admit that the wrongdoer did nothing wrong, given the circumstances the wrongdoer encountered (In this instance, he would be simply the actor, rather than the wrongdoer). The excuse reveals that something outside of the actor's control made him act in a certain way that may have seemed bad without the context. With context, the action is not bad. Often, an injured person may refuse to admit that an actor did nothing wrong. In other cases, a wrongdoer may mistakenly think that his actions were justified. These are unideal situations that would pose an issue for anyone involved, but such issues do not disprove the nature of excuses. Excuses are meant to prove that a person did nothing wrong. Forgiveness is in response to a wrong action.<sup>2</sup>

Victims do not need to worry about condoning evil by forgiving. When forgiving an evil action, a victim does not proclaim to the world that the evil action he forgave was tolerable. In fact, by forgiving a victim states that what a person has done is wrong. The victim of theft does

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Jankelevitch, *Forgiveness*, (Chicago: Andrew Kelley, 2005), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Jankelevitch, *Forgiveness*, 61.

not forgive because the thief did nothing wrong. The victim forgives because theft is wrong, not because the theft was okay. If a victim desired to condone, he would say that the action was not wrong. A victim may condone an evil action, as many people seem to mistakenly do, when they say, “it’s fine,” instead of “I forgive you.” Such cases are not forgiveness though. They are condonation. Forgiveness by its nature necessitates an evil action to respond on account of, and it must acknowledge that the action done was wrong in order to forgive it.

As I mentioned before, forgiveness is not purely an emotional concept. Allusions to forgiveness as something solely tied to the victim’s emotions ignores all of the intellectual aspects that are also a part of forgiveness. One does not forgive solely because an emotion stimulated him. He may have an emotional stimulus that moves him in one direction or another, such as rage motivating him to not forgive or affection to forgive (sometimes both at the same time). Whether or not a person forgives depends on the end he chooses with his will.

Forgiveness does not require emotional relief either. Many psychologists over the past few decades have advocated for the power of forgiveness in personal healing. Their positive results speak for themselves. By saying that forgiveness does not always produce an emotional relief, I do not mean that a person does not heal psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally from forgiveness. In fact, I would say that healing in these three realms often cannot happen without forgiving someone. I mean that one cannot expect to ‘feel better’ immediately after forgiving because forgiveness often does not feel good. It can feel unnatural and against the grain of society (because it is). The healing from forgiveness takes time because a person may still want to punish or be mad after having forgiven. A person heals as he overcomes these desires and lets go of the rage that comes with them.

Haber proposes that forgiving an unapologetic offender reveals a lack of self-respect on the part of the victim.<sup>3</sup> I do not agree because his statement encourages a misunderstanding about the nature of forgiveness. Forgiveness can exist without repentance from the wrongdoer.

Whether or not a person should forgive without repentance from another person depends on moral beliefs. I do not intend to argue whether or not morality demands that people forgive one another. The fact remains that victims can forgive wrongdoers even when the wrongdoer has not asked for forgiveness or made amends for his action. Forgiveness in these instances could take place, but it would rely solely on the victim. In the Christian religion, as I will elaborate upon in the next chapter, forgiveness without an apology is promoted. Jesus exemplified this type of forgiveness, when he forgave his persecutors even after his passion and death.

Forgiveness does not equate to or require reconciliation. Forgiveness merely makes reconciliation possible. By forgiving, a victim chooses to let go of what happened, but he does not have to resume the relationship that was broken. Given the fact that both people will have changed over the course of this encounter, and their views of one another will have changed, having the same relationship might even be impossible. I will use the example of Jennifer and her boyfriend Bob. Jennifer, early in her relationship with Bob, was particularly struck by his attentiveness and willingness to listen. He was such a good listener that she even found herself thinking that he would never ignore her or refuse to listen, when she needed to vent to him. One day, Jennifer had an especially bad day at work, and she wanted to tell Bob about her experience to keep from being overwhelmed. When she met with Bob at the library, Bob cut her off in the middle of her first sentence and indicated towards his book. He clearly wanted to keep reading, rather than listen to her. Bob had never interrupted or asked her to stop talking before. Naturally,

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<sup>3</sup> Joram Haber, *Forgiveness: A Philosophical Study* (Lanham: 1991), 103

Jennifer was injured. Later, Bob apologized and gave a reason that he had acted abnormally. As I have explained above, Bob's reasonable excuse, as long as it only gives context for his behavior, rather than actually attempting to excuse it, does not obtain his forgiveness. Even if Jennifer agrees that the context of Bob's situation was reasonable, she would still have the option to forgive or to not forgive because his action was wrong. Jennifer could forgive Bob and still end their relationship. This would be an example of forgiveness without reconciliation. If she forgives and chooses to stay in the relationship, she would willingly stay with a man that might not always want to listen to her, even if he does not verbalize it again. Even with her misgivings, she reconciles and heals their relationship. They will have a different relationship from before, but that change happens alongside all forgiveness and reconciliation. Jennifer realizes Bob's faults more with every reconciliation, and their relationship evolves as she learns more about Bob.

Victims may not be the only people offended by evil done. Often, people related to the victim or even related to the offender may have a reason to bring justice upon or forgive the wrongdoer. These would be second degree victims, the victim directly affected by an evil being the first-degree victim. Second degree victims, having been wronged in their own right, may forgive the wrongdoer for the wrong that he did to them personally. They cannot forgive the wrongdoer for the wrong he committed against the first-degree victim.

## **Offenses**

When discussing forgiveness, one must also understand the nature of offenses. Without the offense, forgiveness would not exist, and knowing how the offense affects a person allows the observer to know the effects of forgiveness.

A person can be cruel in three ways, as defined by Glen Pettigrove. The first “is that the hurtful action was done with the motives and aims that are characteristic of a cruel person”<sup>4</sup> A broken vase may not financially injure us or have any sentimental significance. The fact that our friend broke it deliberately can be extremely important though. His action shows that he has little regard for our property and, as much as property is an extension of ourselves, little regard for us. He apparently revealed his true regard for the offended, making the offense more about the relationship of the two people and less about the actual deed.

The second way is by doing something directly offensive. “[I]t inflicts severe pain in a context where it is unnecessary or unjustified or both.”<sup>5</sup> The first type of offense hurts purely because of the maliciousness. This type of offense hurts of its own accord. Crimes such as murder, theft, and assault fall under this category. Breaking a vase may be rather easily excused as a crime, but these crimes, no matter the intent, have no excuse.

The third is when the offender “inflicts considerable unnecessary pain upon another, but it is also the kind of action that leads us assume that the agent who performed it has the motives and aims of a cruel person.”<sup>6</sup> This third form is a blend of the two above. The offender has done something cruel with the attitude and apparent intention of a cruel person.

Espen Gamlund identifies two types of offense that overlap with Pettigrove’s. The first is “intentional wrongdoing”. “A person is said to act *intentionally* if he acts in a certain way with the purpose or conscious objective of bringing about a certain result.” Gamlund uses the term *dola* to refer to this form of wrongdoing and considers it the worst of all other forms because, rather than offending on accident, these are deliberately chosen, despite the knowledge that they

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<sup>4</sup> Glen Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love* (Oxford, 2012), 42.

<sup>5</sup> Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love*, 41.

will cause injury. *Dola* is the worst of the two types of offenses for Gamlund because the actor must have the other person's injury as his goal. Most people would agree that intending to hurt someone else is worse than hurting someone on accident.<sup>7</sup>

The second is "unintentional wrongdoing", which he calls *culpa*. Within the bounds of *culpa* are "recklessness" and "negligence". Although an adolescent girl may not have known that jumping out at her elderly grandpa would cause a heart attack, one can reasonably claim that she should have known that a heart attack was a possibility. One can reasonably expect people to know that the elderly are in greater danger of heart attacks than younger people and that stress or fear can induce a heart attack. In the case of the granddaughter, an adult might expect her to have been a part of conversations concerning the grandfather's deteriorating health. Even so, the girl did not know. Recklessness is if the girl knew that her grandfather was in danger of a heart attack, and she still decided to scare him. She did not intentionally cause the heart attack, but she knew the risk she was taking. Unintentional wrongdoing has no malcontent. The actor only meant to accomplish a neutral or good goal, giving her grandfather a pleasant excitement, but ended up harming someone by his negligence, which is still offensive. As mentioned above, several of the parties involved might have cause to forgive the granddaughter. The grandfather himself, any of his other family members, and his friends would all be offended by the granddaughter's *culpa* offense. Thus, they would all have the ability to forgive her.<sup>8</sup>

Linda Radzik forms a more abstract notion of wrongdoings. She holds the view that wrongdoings "send the message" that the victim is inferior. The offender states that he is worth more than the offended, so the offender has the right to do whatever he pleases. Certainly, many people have held this view throughout history. Men have often considered themselves superior to

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<sup>7</sup> Espen Gamlund, *Supererogatory Forgiveness* (2010), 550.

<sup>8</sup> Gamlund, *Supererogatory Forgiveness*, 550.

women, concluding that raping or beating women is perfectly fine for a man to do, especially if his group has conquered her tribe or nation. Similarly, slave owners have always held themselves to be superior to their slaves because of either their higher status in society or simply the fact that they own the slaves like property, and a human being is superior to anything that might be owned. The crimes that misogynistic men and slave owners have committed perpetuate the belief that the victim is inferior. This implied statement is a message to the slave owner's own mind, the slave himself, and everyone that ever hears of his deed. Just telling the story acts like stating the creed of a religion. Victims' repeated injuries lie to them like repeating a false thesis. Over time, he hears the statements made by the offenses so many times that he begins to actually believe in his own inferiority.<sup>9</sup>

Radzik's account of offenses fits with those of Gamlund and Pettigrove. Hers simply focuses on the offender's psychology and how victims are affected by offenses psychologically. Pettigrove's three types of offenses focus on the character of the offender, and Gamlund's two types focus on the intentions of the offender. *Dola* offenses definitely state the victim's inferiority, but *culpa*, in accordance with the fact that it is a lighter offense, makes a less severe statement. Instead of blatantly showing that the other is inferior, the offender says that he is willing to risk the offender person's well-being. Thus, *culpa* offenses show that the victim is not worth the wrongdoer's time or caution.

The various ways of understanding a wrongdoing and how it reveals the nature of the actor plays a large part in a victim's willingness to forgive. It could also influence whether or not a person should forgive. A victim may consider forgiving actions that inflict great pain and reveal a cruel personality as repulsive in all cases. That same victim may consider forgiving

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<sup>9</sup> Linda Radzik, *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics* (Oxford, 2009), 76-77.



someone that inflicted great unnecessary pain in Pettigrove's second sense permissible, as long as it has a *culpa* intentionality. Therefore, many moral decisions depend on the intentions of the wrongdoer and the nature of the wrong done.

While Pettigrove focuses on what actions reveal in the character of the offender, Gamlund identifies the intended goal as the aspect of wrongs that victims must forgive. What victims forgive, ultimately, is a person. Victims forgive a person *for* his action. Thus, the statement "I forgive you for your deed" makes logical sense. Forgiving a person of their debts can be understood in a similar light. Rather than forgiving the debt, which is not an individual but an unpaid sum, a creditor forgives a person *of* their debt. "I forgive your debt" can be understood as a simpler way of saying, "I forgive you of your debt."

### **Pettigrove's Three Types**

Forgiving another person can happen in three ways, as described by Pettigrove. Either a man is stating his emotions (disclosing forgiveness), making a commitment to change his emotions or to act as though he does not have negative emotions anymore (declarative forgiveness), or releasing the criminal from a debt incurred from his evil action (commissive forgiveness). These three definitions do not exclude one another. They can coexist, even if a person only intends one version of forgiveness, when they say, "I forgive you."

When a husband, after years of emotionally torturing his wife by being disinterested in her activities and not pursuing her, finally realizes his fault, when he confronts her, he will hope that she can forgive him. His hope for forgiveness, assuming he is a reasonable person, will include her goodwill towards him and her choosing not to respond in kind to his actions. Given this, there seem to be two essential parts to forgiveness, how it relates to the victim's emotions

and how it relates to justice. In this way, forgiveness does seem to separate into the three forms of forgiveness mentioned above.

### *Disclosive Forgiveness*

Glen Pettigrove explains disclosive forgiveness as a form of notification. The victim no longer feels hurt, even though what the criminal did was wrong. Ideally, a victim, while forgiving, would also mean that he is not angry. Typically, we hope that the people we have hurt will not be angry with us, they forgive us, and forgiveness without this aspect makes little sense. One could say, “I forgive you,” while still angry. Often times, we do this because it seems to be the right thing to do, rather than because we intend to please God or fulfill our moral obligation. In the case of the wife, she may forgive him while still angry. Both she and the husband would hope that her emotions improve over time though. Unfortunately, for any number of reasons, her emotional state may not improve, even though she honestly forgave him. Addressing this apparent issue, Pettigrove writes, “a reduction in anger is not a necessary condition for saying, ‘I forgive you’. Neither is it a sufficient condition.”<sup>10</sup> Considering the analogy of the angry wife and Pettigrove’s statement, a person’s emotional state cannot constitute the entirety of forgiveness. A person’s emotional state still seems relevant to forgiveness. If emotional state did were not relevant, then bitterness after forgiveness could not be appalling. Because emotional state is relevant but not solely conditional, dissociative forgiveness becomes a necessary definition in forgiveness.

### *Commissive Forgiveness*

Commissive forgiveness has an element of choice that disclosive forgiveness does not allow for. Commissive forgiveness is a commitment, and, as a commitment, it must be a choice.

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<sup>10</sup> Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love*, 7.

So too, forgiveness only makes sense, if it is a choice. As opposed to declarative forgiveness, which I will explain next, it is “more like a promise than a pardon. In the utterance I am committing myself to a course of action.”<sup>11</sup> The victim chooses to actively work towards changing his emotions towards his persecutor. Although this concept may seem daunting, many psychologists tend to work within this realm of forgiveness, guiding people through intentional steps that actively work towards emotional recovery.

### *Declarative Forgiveness*

Declarative forgiveness releases a person from his debt to an individual, society, or both. This version of forgiveness poses its own issues because it does not necessarily relate to either of the other two. Instead of corresponding to an emotion or an emotional commitment, declarative forgiveness is entirely relative to justice. The victim chooses mercy. This form of forgiveness does not necessarily require an apology or remorse from the wrongdoer. Any victim can make the decision to refuse pressing charges. The drawback that Pettigrove identifies in this conception is that “we are uncomfortable occupying the role of the priest or of God. Most of us aren’t in the absolution business, and it feels we have overstepped our bounds, speaking with an authority not our own, when we are asked to remove guilt.”<sup>12</sup> Naturally, his claim does not hold universally among people. Some individuals feel completely fine with taking charge and seizing any chance of authority. Napoleon demanded such authority, even. In general though, people do tend to be more timid in laying blame. This does not actually argue that people cannot forgive so much as help to explain why people may not forgive. If John is uncomfortable with being superior to another person or holding a position of authority, he will probably avoid situations like that.

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<sup>11</sup> Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> Pettigrove, *Forgiveness and Love*, 12.

## CHAPTER II

### HOW DOES ONE FORGIVE

#### Etymology

From the very nature of the word, one can tell that forgiveness entails giving. It comes from the Old English word *forgiefan*, which can be translated “pardon (an offense).” More interestingly, breaking the two Old English words apart reveals for- “completely” and giefan- “to give,” showing that the true nature of the word forgiveness is a complete giving of some sort. Naturally, this cannot comprise an entire definition, but it is a good start. Forgiveness requires giving the other complete freedom. Before, the transgressor owed the victim, but the victim has now released the other by letting go of the transgression, as a gift.<sup>13</sup>

#### Mercy

As I mentioned in the introduction, forgiveness is an act of mercy. The nature of mercy is not universally agreed upon. “Mercy signifies grief for another's distress. Now this grief may denote, in one way, a movement of the sensitive appetite, in which case mercy is not a virtue but a passion; whereas, in another way, it may denote a movement of the intellective appetite, in as much as one person's evil is displeasing to another. This movement may be ruled in accordance with reason, and in accordance with this movement regulated by reason, the movement of the lower appetite may be regulated.”<sup>14</sup> Victims may not begin to love their persecutors, but even the most psychologically wounded can begin to see the broken humanity in these evil people. By injuring our fellow men, we injure ourselves just as much. Victims, if they wish to forgive, must realize this fact and take pity upon it, thereby having mercy.

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<sup>13</sup> "Forgive (v.)." Index. Accessed April 09, 2018. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/forgive>.

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (New York, 1947), 2a.2ae.30.3

## **Supererogatory**

Supererogatory means something that morally is good but not necessary. They, “while admirable and praiseworthy, still lie beyond duty.”<sup>15</sup> Christians originally used the term to refer to actions that pleased God or were morally superior to not doing them but were not required for salvation. Aquinas uses the term for virginity until death, martyrdom, and preaching. He concludes that, although a person has shown great devotion to God and won an incredible victory by these actions, people can reach salvation without them.<sup>16</sup> Aquinas considered these three battles the only cases of supererogation, but, contemporary philosophy has begun to use the notion of an unnecessary but good action in reference to many moral issues.

In the case of forgiveness, the concept questions whether a person must forgive or can morally choose not to. In American society, there are no instances when the nation as a whole might agree that forgiveness is morally compulsory. Therefore, I will analyze Christian and Judaic writers’ arguments on this topic along with the larger tradition of forgiveness within the two. Typically, philosophers focus whether or not forgiving apologetic offenders.

## **Apologies**

Parents often order their children to apologize for doing something wrong. Their intention is typically to inspire remorse and teach that whatever the child did was wrong. To many parents’ disappointment, children often do not seem truly sorry. These children are not sorry because they are not repentant. Repentance is not solely an emotion, like regret. Repentance has an intellectual factor, which is to acknowledge that what one did was wrong and the intention to atone for the wrong committed. True atonement is to offer “something which the

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<sup>15</sup> Gamlund *Supererogatory Forgiveness* p. 540

<sup>16</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Supplement.96

offended one loves equally, or even more than he detested the offense.”<sup>17</sup> If an offender does not fulfill this definition of atonement, one would not consider him truly sorry or repentant. He could still regret his action, since this would only entail an emotional sorrow for the transgression. True repentance would require his choice to undo his sin.

Apologies also serve to show that a person or group rejects former actions. “The spokesperson symbolically withdraws the insult.”<sup>18</sup> As I explained in the first chapter, many insults serve as insults to demean the victim. Apologies have a healing effect on these instances. By apologizing, while the offender must intend to repent and make up for his crimes, his apology admits that he was wrong. He acknowledges that his claim of superiority was also false, aiding in his atonement by setting the attempting to redeem the first thing that was ruined in the first place, which was the victim’s self-esteem.

## **Christian**

Forgiveness and the Christian God may seem to conflict because an omnipotent and unchangeable God cannot undergo the necessary affects necessary for forgiveness. The Christian must believe that God can forgive in some sense though, since even the most universal Symbol of Christians, the Apostle’s Creed, states, “I believe in [...] the forgiveness of sins.” Before explaining how the Christian God can forgive, An important distinction to make for the Thomistic Christian is that God cannot be separated from His Will. He is pure act and has no separate intentions or acts distinguishable from His one single act. We perceive His one act as many because we exist in time, and God exists outside of time, where, as a timeless being, there is no way to act in any other way than one single movement for all of eternity. For beings

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<sup>17</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.48.2

<sup>18</sup> Radzik, *Making Amends: Atonement in Morality, Law, and Politics*, 188.

existing in time, such as ourselves, His action translates as multiple acts within our linear timeline.

For those unfamiliar with this concept, an easier way of comprehending it is to think of the difference between a mathematical point and a mathematical line segment. The point is one singular point. It cannot be separated in any way because, by definition it is one, inseparable point. A line segment is all the points in between two points. The line segment can represent our linear time. For God, the entire line segment exists as one single point. He may affect us at a single moment in time, and He knows how to affect time linearly. He still witnesses and comprehends all of time as one might witness and comprehend a single point, even though He affects this “dot” in a way that affects our time linearly. I do not have nearly enough space to go into more detail about the nature of time and God’s relationship to time, considering the countless volumes and lifetimes spent on discussing this issue. The above analogy will serve its well enough for the purpose of this thesis. Since God exists outside of our time, nothing we do can affect Him. We might even say that our actions have already affected Him (in a sense).

The Christian God cannot release angry emotions, so disclosive forgiveness seems impossible for God. He has no angry emotions, even in His judgement. He loves those He punishes because He punishes on account of His divine justice, not anger. His love does not come from an emotion in Him either. In God, there are no emotions. He loves as an act of the will. To explain this further would require another thesis on the philosophical nature of emotions, so knowing that God loves as an act will suffice.

God can, in a sense forgive in a commissive fashion, if He makes the promise to treat a person or humanity as though He did not have negative emotions. He could reasonably make this promise, as He made many other promises throughout the Bible. The vow would make no sense

though. God loves us, and He will always treat humanity in a loving fashion, although that love may mean that He punishes the beloved for the beloved's own good. Therefore, He will not react towards anyone with the same motivations or with any of the emotions that a human would. I will use the analogy of a father and son. The son because he has been bullied today and feels lonely tries to belittle his father at the dinner table by complaining about how terrible his father's cooking is. The father, even though he took two hours to make dinner after having already spent a full day at work, may or may not be angry. If he is angry, his emotions are reasonable because the son is showing disrespect and refusing to appreciate all of his father's hard work. Whether or not the father is angry though does not determine if the son will be punished. An angry father could punish his son, but an unemotional father could also punish his son. In fact, most parental advice seems to suggest that punishing without emotion is better. The same holds for God. Even though He may punish, he never punishes because our actions made Him angry. He punishes because what we did was wrong, and the laws of justice demand satisfaction. How He punishes and whether that punishment occurs before or after death does not necessarily affect this discussion.

God can forgive in a declarative fashion. This definition makes more sense than the others because declarative forgiveness does not require emotions. He would simply be merciful, which is an action that does not require emotions for it to be legitimate. If humanity deserves damnation for eternity, God, out of love and mercy, can choose to give those who repent more than they deserve, which, in this case, would be an eternal life in communion with Him.

Christianity has considered this nature of God and His forgiveness throughout Its philosophical history. It may not have defined the word forgiveness exactly, but, considering that English has translated multiple Latin words into "forgive", earlier Christian philosophers,



speaking and writing mostly in Latin within the context of religious philosophy, probably never considered defining more specific words that already had their own allusions and specific context (i.e. “dimitte” in the Pater Noster, “perdonare”, “propitio” in the story of Jacob and Esau). The words for the forgiveness God gives to humanity and the forgiveness that humans give to one another do not differ. God forgives in the same fashion that humans forgive. For this reason, Christian forgiveness has classically developed into a purely declarative forgiveness.

A Christian may use the word forgiveness in a commissive or disclosive sense at his own discretion, but, if he intends to follow the teachings of Jesus, he must couple these with declarative forgiveness in certain circumstances. Since the Christian does not desire for God to forgive in a disclosive or commissive sense, he must hope for a declarative forgiveness from God. Likewise, as the Our Father says, “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us”, the Christian commits to forgive others in the way he wishes God to forgive him.<sup>19</sup> Augustine elaborates that “no one who refuses to forgive from the heart a person who does ask and is repentant of his sin, must ever think his own sins are forgiven by the Lord: for the Truth is incapable of lying.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the Christian has an obligation to forgive the repentant in order to attain his own salvation. The Christian wishes for God to forgive as the Christian himself forgives, so he must forgive the apologetic, if he ever hopes for God to forgive when the Christian apologizes. When a Christian fulfills his obligation to forgive the repentant, he must forgive in a declarative sense. Forgiving the repentant in a commissive or disclosive sense does not seem to be the same type of forgiveness that a Christian hopes for from God. Although, these types of forgiveness, especially commissive, would probably overlap declarative

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<sup>19</sup> Mat 6:12

<sup>20</sup> Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love* (Washington, D.C.: Thomas S. Hibbs, 1996), 65.

forgiveness in many circumstances, making them necessary for declarative forgiveness to take place at all.

## **Jewish**

In Jewish philosophy, forgiveness does not make itself quite as evident through scriptural revelation. Since Jewish scriptures do not discuss interpersonal forgiveness quite as much, Jewish philosophy has much broader bounds in its conception of forgiveness. Jewish tradition, like that of Christianity considers interpersonal forgiveness similar to forgiveness from God on account of Yom Kippur and Jewish thought pertaining God's forgiveness of humans. Because of these similar conceptions and a joined ancestry, Christian and Jewish forgiveness tend to be similar in their conception of forgiveness as a matter for justice and for emotional healing.

Unlike Christianity, Judaism does not have any instances of forgiveness being shown without an apology, and a devout Jew might consider the Christian practice of forgiving the unrepentant as abhorrent. To drive the wedge even further, Judaism does not require forgiving the repentant at all, since this arose as a Christian phenomenon built upon Jesus' teaching of 'turning the other cheek'. Instead, "[T]he offended individual must always be appeased, approached, and consoled individually," rather than disregarding another person's injury because God can forgive the offender.<sup>21</sup> Jankelevitch argues that no one can ever have a reason to forgive. If he does forgive, it is purely for the good of the other. The beloved and his actions are very reason not to forgive.<sup>22</sup> This belief leaves the nature of when to forgive a more secular issue for Jewish philosophy because requiring atonement does not require a religious authority to make it official or right. Laws can require that a criminal atone for a crime without appealing to religion. Similarly, Jewish people do not need to appeal to their religion to demand justice.

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<sup>21</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings* (Bloomington: Annette Aronowicz, 1990), 20.

<sup>22</sup> Jankelevitch, *Forgiveness*, 130.

The Jewish secular attitude towards interpersonal forgiveness has led to conflicting approaches towards forgiveness within Judaism. Even Emmanuel Levinas, a distinguished Jewish philosopher, states at the beginning of one of his essays, “one should not think after hearing me that the Jewish intellectuals of France now know what the Jewish tradition thinks of forgiveness.”<sup>23</sup> The Jewish conception of forgiveness is more difficult to philosophically define than the Christian conception because Judaism has fewer clear doctrines for Jewish philosophers to build their positions upon.

Within Jewish philosophy, the choice to forgive the repentant is each individual’s decision, meaning forgiveness is entirely supererogatory in all cases. If he does not forgive, he has done nothing wrong. The opposite would be that a victim must forgive and, the “right of forgiveness destroys forgiveness.”<sup>24</sup> If he does, then it seems to be a personal decision.

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<sup>23</sup> Levinas *Nine Talmudic Readings*, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Jankelevitch, *Forgiveness*, 10.

## CHAPTER III

### GENOCIDES

#### The Holocaust

Immediately after the World War II, most of the Nazi leaders were prosecuted in a court of law by various international tribunals under the authority of the newly founded United Nations. Then, most of the survivors wanted to forget that the Holocaust had ever happened, as the Germans were. It was not until the generation after the survivors that trials for crimes committed during the war became prevalent again. The descendants of victims realized that many Nazi criminals escaped without ever facing punishment, and they devoted extensive effort towards bringing them to justice. France held several iconic trials against Nazi criminals that were in their 80's and 90's.

Although the various opinions of individuals in Europe and of the Jewish people cannot be summed up in a single paragraph, public opinion of Germany is still cautious and mistrusting.<sup>25</sup> In the past seventy years, the world has changed at a staggering rate, but the pain the world felt from the Holocaust has remained. Whether the victims, their families, and people offended by the crimes of the Nazis should forgive the German people and surviving Nazis is a moral discussion I am not qualified to write about in this thesis. I will highlight the Jewish conception of forgiveness as I explained it earlier, given that Jewish conceptions of forgiveness are especially relevant to this situation. What forgiveness in this case would be and how people might go about it must be known before ever asserting that people should forgive. Fundamentally, forgiveness should look the same as any other case of forgiveness. Offended

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<sup>25</sup> "Germany's Road to Redemption Shines amid Europe's Refugee Debate." *The Washington Post*, September 11, 2015. Accessed April 9, 2018. [http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-38729015.html?refid=easy\\_hf](http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-38729015.html?refid=easy_hf).

individuals or groups will make the same intentions and claims that they would in another case that is less severe.

Whether a man forgives a German or the Germans is as different a concept as a victim of the Holocaust forgiving versus the victims of the Holocaust forgiving is different. Although the emotional aspect of forgiveness is largely removed for the victims in intergroup forgiveness, and not everyone may agree on the decision, groups can forgive. In the case of the Holocaust, the group forgiving would be either the Jews as a whole, who were injured by the Holocaust either directly or by being a Jew, or survivors of the Holocaust. Other groups could represent themselves within these groups just as individuals could, but these are the two groups that are most unified and were most affected by the Holocaust. A representative of these victims would have to forgive on behalf of the entire group. In this case, the most reasonable leader among the Jewish people would have to be either a religious leader or the president of Israel. Only men with this high of status could rightfully claim the authority and representative power needed to forgive on this scale. Such forgiveness would be almost solely declarative, since such representative cannot speak on behalf of the emotional states or intentions of his constituents. A group forgiveness like this would simply mean that Israel or the religious congregation of Jews would interact with the German people or the Nazi survivors (whichever group would be forgiven) without attempting to punish them for the crimes committed during the Holocaust.

Individuals have the opportunity to practice disclosive and commissive forgiveness. They are the only ones able to reveal their emotions or commit to changing their emotions. Therefore, a Jewish victim may decide to stop treating Germans with suspicion. He could do this because German people as a whole had proven themselves trustworthy. This constant trustworthiness could constitute a form of atonement. A victim could make the same commitment without the

Germans' improved behavior towards him. It may prove more difficult, but he could forgive in either circumstance.

Since the majority of the victims no longer live in close proximity with the people that betrayed and murdered their race, Jews have not been forced into interpersonal forgiveness, typically. As I will explain, not all victims have the opportunity to escape from their former enemies. Because forgiveness never took root at the lower levels, intergroup forgiveness seems like the most likely means that victims of the Holocaust might ever forgive. Interpersonal forgiveness would need the Jews and the Germans to interact regularly, forming relationships. Such an occurrence could only make forgiveness of this type more available. The relationships that Germans and Jews might form could easily ignite feuds, rather than encourage geniality.

Often, the pain sinks too deep. The wounds leave too much damage to even discuss it, let alone do something about it. At the trial of Adolf Eichmann, Yehiel De-Nur, a Jewish survivor, fainted after giving his statement. The strain of simply discussing the horror of the Holocaust had been too much. If he could not relive the experience without serious physical distress, could he ever forgive his captors? The pain of interacting with such a criminal might be physically beyond him. This is an inhibition to forgiveness. The fact that some people are kept from forgiving shows no fault in the act of forgiveness and gives no reason why forgiveness is an illegitimate choice. Instead, opposition to forgiveness shows that, like other moral decisions, forgiving people is difficult. Reasons will always pop up not to forgive. Reasons why justice or temperance are hard do not show that there is something wrong with them. Justice and

temperance are good and good virtues to uphold, no matter how hard they may become. It is the same for forgiveness.<sup>26</sup>

As I mentioned, the victims are not the only people capable of forgiving or of holding something against wrongdoers. In *The Music Box* a lawyer, Ann Talbot, defends her father, Mike Laszlo, against charges of war crimes against Hungarian Jews. Several Jewish survivors give their testimonies, telling the horrifying tale of their torture by the seemingly innocent and kind-hearted father. The Jewish victims are certain of his identity, but the prosecution is eventually unable to prove that Mike was the same man that committed war crimes in Hungary. In the end, after Ann has successfully defended her father, she finds hidden pictures that reveal to her that her father really had committed all the crimes he was accused of. When she confronts him, he continues to deny everything. This fictional court case exemplifies much of the frustration that victims of the Holocaust and their descendants experienced after the war.<sup>27</sup>(Laurel, Hardy, and Parrott 1986)

Ann becomes just another one of Mike's victims. Having been dragged into defending him, he uses her for his own escape. To a lesser degree than the Jewish victims, she has to contemplate how to move forward from a crime that the offender and justice refuse to admit. Forgiveness may hardly even enter the minds of these injured people, especially since Mike refuses to apologize, let alone even admit he played any part. In fact, the Jewish victims already chose to punish him, rather than forgive. When the law failed to bring justice upon Mike, they were not forced to forgive. Rather, they were simply wronged of their right to justice. Similarly,

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<sup>26</sup> Hurwitz, Leo. "Eichmann Trial -- Sessions 68 and 69 -- Testimonies of Y. Dinur, Y. Bakon, A. Oppenheimer, A. Beilin." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Accessed April 09, 2018. <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn1001698>.

<sup>27</sup> Laurel, Stan, Oliver Hardy, and James Parrott. *The Music Box ; Helpmates. Hal Roach Studios ; Directed by James Parrott*. [Place of publication not identified] : Hal Roach Studios Film Classics, [1986?], 1986. Videorecording.

Ann was forced into a situation where she also could not punish her father for his betrayal. She too cannot declaratively forgive because she has no ability to punish.

The Jewish victims and Ann, although they cannot declaratively forgive Mike, as they might in an ideal situation, can still pity in the way necessary to show mercy. Overall, Mike is a pitiable figure. He is so wrapped up in his own survival that he has allowed these lies to consume his relationship with his only daughter, a woman that would and has put her career on the line for him. Mike escaped, but he lost everything worth saving. A Jewish victim could, even if he had no power in justice, forgive Mike by pitying his wounds, rather than hating him for his crimes. This would be how victim or Ann could forgive Mike commissively and disclosively. By realizing that Mike is actually just another pathetic human who has destroyed himself by his own corruption, a victim injured by him may either despise or pity him. To despise him for how pathetic he is would only change the nature of the victim's hatred. For the victim to pity him for it would mean that that victim could no longer truly hate as he did before. The victim might stop hating entirely, which would be disclosive forgiveness, whether he admitted this change to his offender or not. Pity might also move the victim to commissively forgive the offender.

This forgiveness would have to take place on an individual level. As I explained above, commissive and declarative forgiveness are solely done by individuals towards individuals or groups. The Group cannot forgive as one whole, but each individual can forgive the group.

In the case of the Holocaust, Jewish philosophy argues against forgiving. Often, philosophers claim that forgiveness is impossible. As I have shown above, forgiveness is possible. The Jewish people may not consider it until the Germans meet certain conditions, but the victims have the ability to forgive. Even if the Germans apologized, Jewish morality argues



that victims press charges on behalf of the dead who cannot forgive.<sup>28</sup> Thus, forgiveness is possible, but Jewish morality does not allow for it. The theory of forgiveness holds.

### **The Rwandan Genocide**

After the Rwandan genocide, Paul Kagame, the president of Rwanda, used his power to pardon all the Hutus that admitted what they had done, forcing victims to once again face their tormenters.<sup>29</sup> President Kagame's pardon is an excellent example of intergroup declarative forgiveness. He removed their debt to society. It also shows that this kind of forgiveness does not solve everyone's problems. It has helped Rwanda to heal, but people still struggle with trauma. People still fear another insurrection or general violence from the men that killed their families, and that only highlights the fact that this pardon is more than the Hutus deserved. They deserved the death penalty or incarceration, and the Tutsis, through a representative that had the power to do so, had pity on them. Paul Kagame granted these Hutus mercy.

In *As We Forgive*, a documentary of several Tutsis struggling with the memory of what their Hutu neighbors had done during the genocide, Chantal struggles to forgive her apologetic neighbor, John. Chantal's entire family had been killed because they were Tutsis. Chantal had actually been beaten alongside her family and left for dead. John had been among the Hutus that attacked. For years, John had lived right beside Chantal and her family. They were friends, until the genocide. The Hutu attack and John's participation was not only a complete betrayal.<sup>30</sup>

Chantal faces a similar problem that Ann faced in *The Music Box*. Neither of them had the option justice any longer. They can only face a situation in which a war criminal has already escaped. Chantal would be well within her rights to not forgive, except John apologizes, and, as I

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<sup>28</sup> Jankelevitch, *Should We Pardon Them* (1996), 571.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-rwanda-genocide-man-and-victim-now-friends-2014apr06-story.html>

<sup>30</sup> *As We Forgive*. Directed by Laura Waters Hinson. Produced by Laura Waters Hinson and Stephen McEveety. Performed by Mia Farrow. Team Marketing, 2008. DVD.

explained above, we must assume he intends to atone for his sin, if he truly apologizes. Living in an overwhelmingly Christian nation, Chantal has grown up in a culture that requires forgiveness, if someone apologizes. If Chantal is a practicing Christian, her faith demands that she forgive John. As was also mentioned in the section above, she has only the option to pity him. John is a pitiable character. He must live the rest of his life knowing that he actively engaged in one of the most awful mass killings human beings have ever seen, and he realizes how wrong he was. He wakes up knowing that he killed his neighbors and friends. He goes to sleep knowing that it was his fault. If Chantal chooses not to forgive, she chooses to not pity John. Truly, pity for her former persecutor is the only way to forgive. She cannot change her emotions towards him, unless she realizes that his crime did not make him a monster. It made him pathetic and even more broken than he was before.

Survivors like Chantal may know the methods available of forgiveness, but many criminals ran away, leaving survivors with only a memory of the monster that organized their demise. Philip Gourevitch tells the story of a Hutu pastor that turned other Hutus on the Tutsis in the tribe, even though the Tutsis were also members of his congregation. These Tutsis, when they were about to be slaughtered, turned toward this pastor, Ntakirutimana, writing him a letter stating, “We wish to inform you that we have heard that tomorrow we will be killed with our families. We therefore request you to intervene on our behalf”.<sup>31</sup> Ntakirutimana instigated killing, refused the pleas of his own Christian flock, and ran away to America afterwards. He left an entire community to struggle with their rage, leaving behind only the memory of a monster. These survivors have, in many ways a much more difficult task than Chantala’s. Indeed, Chantala must face the man that killed her family, but she has the chance to see him in his

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<sup>31</sup> Phillip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families : Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 42.

poverty. Ntakirutimana's congregation can only imagine the human brokenness in him that would lead to his actions. They are also not required to forgive by Christian doctrine, since he never apologized or even admitted his crime. Unlikely to ever passively stop being mad, these victims have only commissive forgiveness. They must actively work towards pitying him, if they wish to forgive.

The Tutsis can still forgive the Hutus commissively or disclosively, but disclosive forgiveness seems an unlikely. Many victims already have forgiven the men that used to hunt them, but their mercy came with difficulty.<sup>32</sup> They struggle to forgive because they are still so angry. By the prompting of Christianity, which is the dominant religion in Rwanda, many victims forgive Hutus individually after discussions and one-on-one testimonies. As I mentioned above, Christianity demands that victims forgive, if the criminal is repentant. Therefore, forgiveness is possible and many Rwandans already have forgiven. Forgiveness as I have defined it does apply to these victims.

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<sup>32</sup> Laura Waters Hinson, *As We Forgive* (2008)

## CONCLUSION

Forgiveness is not dependent on emotions, but it is an emotional process. Victims can forgive the people that have wronged them in three ways, either notifying them that they are not angry, disclosive, making a commitment to stop having angry emotions, commissive, or releasing the wrongdoer from a debt incurred by his evil action, declarative. These three types of forgiveness often mix together. Despite the fluidity of the word forgiveness, all three of these definitions are acts of mercy. They give to an evildoer more than he deserves. He deserves to be treated with anger. He deserves to be punished for his crime. Mercy gives him love or, at least, a lack of hatred. Mercy gives him freedom instead of his deserved incarceration, life instead of death.

For the victims of genocide, forgiveness seems daunting. They have the power to give mercy though. They can forgive as groups or amongst themselves. They can only forgive for the harm done to them though, which may include the pain they felt by proxy of someone who has died. The victims of genocide do not forget the dead by forgiving for the crimes committed against themselves. They must always remember how evil man can be. Through forgiveness, victims are able to rise above the evil they experienced and create good out of evil. Because I have shown that my theory of what forgiveness is is applicable to the cases of forgiveness shown and the cases when people chose not to forgive, I consider to have withstood the test cases I presented to it.

I have attempted to avoid the morality of whether or not to forgive outside of explaining the Jewish and Christian positions. As one can see, even among related religions whether or not a religion supports forgiving varies greatly. I have solely tried to create a theory of what forgiveness is that applies in all cases, even the extreme. Without knowing what forgiveness is,

one cannot truly argue a morality of whether or not to forgive. The morality of whether or not to forgive is not foreign to philosophy, but I have not devoted my research to that area as thoroughly.

Forgiveness is possible. We can forgive each other even for genocide. Forgiveness is also not a convoluted topic. It means something, and what a person can mean by forgiveness changes with the situation and the victim's intentions. Most importantly, forgiveness is always a choice. Forgiveness is not forgiveness unless we choose it.

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